Black-headed Pardalote *(Pardalotus melanocephalus)*—Common in the Reserve, a female (A 11585) being collected at Cape Baskerville on June 22, and another (A 11605) at 12 miles east-southeast of Cape Bertholet on July 4.

Red-headed Honeyeater *(Myzomela erythrocephala)*—It was common in mangroves, a male (A 11589) being collected at Cape Baskerville on June 25.

Rufous-throated Honeyeater *(Conopophila rufogularis)*—A few were observed along creeks, a juvenile female (A 11604) being collected at 12 miles east-southeast of Cape Bertholet on July 3.

Olive-backed Oriole *(Oriolus sagittatus)*—Two birds were seen in the Cape Baskerville mangroves on June 27; one of them (a female, A 11599) was collected.

Four species, though previously known from Dampier Land through the work of Rudolf Soderberg in 1911, were not hitherto known to occur south of Beagle Bay.

Northern Fantail *(Rhipidura rufiventris)*—A male (A 11613) was collected in the Cape Bertholet mangroves on July 16.

Leaden Flycatcher *(Myiagra rubecula)*—It was moderately common in thickets, a pair (A 11601-2) being collected at 12 miles east-southeast of Cape Bertholet on July 2.

White-throated Warbler *(Gerygone olivacea)*—Moderately common in wooded country throughout the Reserve, a female (A 11584) being collected at Cape Baskerville on June 22.

White-gaped Honeyeater *(Stomiopera unicolor)*—Common in dense coastal vegetation, a male (A 11609) being collected at Point Coulomb on July 14.

I am grateful to Dr A. A. Burbidge (Department of Fisheries and Fauna) for the opportunity to work on the Reserve, and to Dr G. M. Storr (Western Australian Museum) for data from his unpublished paper on the birds of the Kimberley Division in addition to his personal encouragement and assistance.

—W. H. BUTLER, Wanneroo.

Silver Gulls using a Thermal.—The use of air currents and thermal pockets is a well documented phenomenon, and I was able to witness this behaviour by a number of Silver Gulls, *Larus novaehollandiae*. The observation took place at a steel foundry on the water-front at South Fremantle on 12 October, 1972, between 13.40 and 13.52 hrs. It was a hot, still afternoon with a maximum temperature of 26.5° C recorded in Perth for that day.

Inside the foundry preparations were being made to charge the furnace with steel and the furnace had been heated in readiness. During this operation, three exhaust fans situated above the furnace are activated to expel dust and smoke into the atmosphere at a rate of approximately 432 cubic metres per minute (50,000 c. ft./min.) through an opening with an area of approximately 3.5 sq. metres. Usually this column of hot air is quickly dispersed by the prevailing wind, but under the calm and windless conditions at the time the thermal produced by the fans remained undisturbed.

Silver Gulls are common along the beach-front and my attention was drawn to a number of birds that were circling above the foundry. Between 50 and 60 birds were soaring in an area roughly 12 metres in diameter at heights ranging from 25 to 50 metres above the ground. Most of the birds in the thermal circled on stiff wings, flapping to regain the column of hot air when they drifted away from it.

Some birds were indulging in spectacular dives near the outer edge of the thermal. A bird would flick over onto its back and drop vertically with its wings half closed, descending five or six metres at a time in three or four stages. At the end of each stage the bird would fling out its wings and pull up short, either to dive again or sail in a circle within the thermal, often without regaining height. Not all gulls in the vicinity were engaging in these flights, and a number were seen patrolling the beach and surrounding area.

The column of birds above the foundry drifted very slowly westward, spreading further apart as the thermal dispersed. At about 13.50 hrs the smoke from the furnace increased in volume, producing a thick brown cloud that drifted to the west, driven by a light off-shore breeze. The circling

birds were well clear of the smoke and were gradually scattering over a wider area above the ocean. By 13.50 hrs there was no longer a congregation of birds for they had spread out above the shoreline and the foundry.

The only vocalising heard during the observation period was an occasional "kark" call by the circling birds.

—PERRY DE REBEIRA, Tuart Hill.

An Occurrence of the Planktonic Blue-Green Alga, *Oscillatoria erythraea*, at Cottesloe.—At 11 a.m., March 25, 1973, rust red bands of the planktonic alga *Oscillatoria erythraea* (syn. *Trichodesmium erythraea* see N. Sammy, 'Historical Notes on the Sea Saw Dust' *Scios*, 8 (1), 1973) were observed in the main bathing area at Cottesloe Beach. The wind was almost due west, the temperature 26°C and the sea relatively calm. By 1 p.m. the wind had changed to a south-westerly and the alga concentrated into an area directly in front of the main beach pavilion. The concentration at this stage was sufficient to discolour the ocean and to deter bathers from swimming in its immediate vicinity. A sample was collected for identification in the laboratory and is now catalogued in the Herbarium of the Botany Department, University of Western Australia. By 3 p.m. the intensity of the south-westerly had increased and the alga was quickly dispersed. A previous record for *O. erythraea* at Cottesloe is recorded by G. G. Smith *(W.A. Nat.*, 12 (4): 81.

—K. F. KENNEALLY, Botany Department, University of Western Australia.

Husking Seeds by Cockatoos.—At the 1973 Annual Wild Life Show held in September in the Fremantle Town Hall, a very interesting observation on feeding by cockatoos was made by Mr Bob Reid, of the Nature Advisory section of the Education Department, and later confirmed several times by myself.

A female Major Mitchell, *Cacatua leadbeateri*, was seen to be feeding from a fresh dish of mixed seed when it plunged its beak deep into the seeds, *once only*, and climbed to its perch. Being within three inches of the bird Mr Reid was able to see quite clearly that there was a quantity of seed held under the tongue in the mouth. One seed at a time was moved to the top of the tongue where it was de-husked at the tip of the beak and swallowed.

Sulphur-crested Cockatoos, *C. galerita*, and Corellas, *C. sanguinea*, were watched closely and they fed in exactly the same manner. Even when given biscuits the birds broke off sizeable pieces which were stored under the tongue to be broken down later into smaller fragments before being swallowed.

—ARTHUR G. MATHEWS, South Perth.

A Third Specimen of the Pectoral Sandpiper.—The Zoological Gardens has received a Pectoral Sandpiper, *Erolia melanotos*, believed female, and is exhibiting it alongside four Sharptails captured with it. This specimen is the third to be actually taken in Western Australia *(Birds of Western Australia*, Serventy and Whittell, 4th edn. 1967).

The bird was trapped on Streets' Lake, Moora, on February 6, 1973 by Wally Gibb and Jim Sharland of the Department of Fisheries and Fauna while engaged in capturing Pink-eared Ducks for Sir Peter Scott's Wildfowl Trust, Slimbridge, England. The five sandpipers were walked into a funnel trap, four Sharptails, *E. acuminata*, and the Pectoral. The last named was identified on the spot by Mr. Sharland and the birds were conveyed to the Zoo, where they have reconciled well to captivity.

Handling demonstrated the diagnostic features: breast sharply differentiated from the white abdomen; mantle feathers more rounded, less lanceolate than in Sharptail; tail outline doubly emarginate; in the bill, both mandible and premaxilla were dusky yellow for the basal two-thirds (in the Sharptail, the premaxilla is virtually all dark while less than one quarter of the basal part of the mandible is light-coloured). The crown did not exhibit the rufous tint shown by some (?male) Sharptails. The legs were light yellowish but not noticeably different from the colour of many Sharptails and would not be a good field character in my opinion.

—TOM SPENCE, Zoological Gardens, South Perth.